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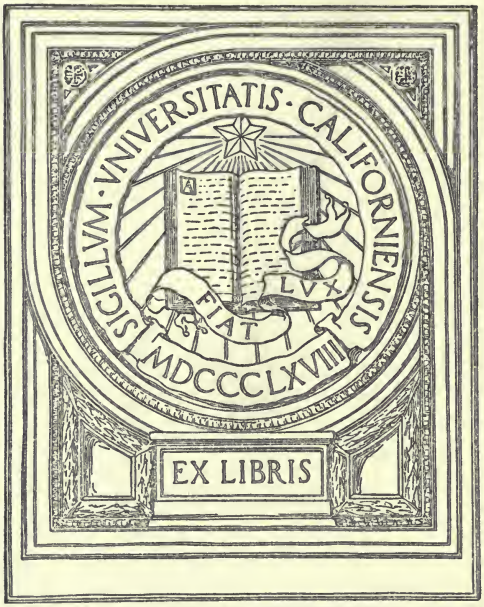
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MEXICAN MOONLIGHT

RUSSELL MERIWETHER HUGHES

BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER
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1921

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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UNIV OF CALIFORNIA

To
DAVID A. NEWCOMER

M191957

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MEXICAN MOONLIGHT

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LOVE SONG

If you could love me half as much,
O, my dear, my dear,
Within the swaying hours of all
The long, sweet year,
As I love you within the falling
Of one tear,
I think I could be satisfied,
O, my dearest dear!

MEXICAN MOONLIGHT

(Etchings)

1

The clouds of your blue-black hair
Crowd,
Heavy,
About the bright moon
Of your face
When you lift your star-spangled comb.
I feel a storm of passion
Gathering over me!

2

A Child)

Madre,
Does the moon
Chant lullabies?
Or is it only
The crickets
Singing?

3

The midsummer moon
Laughing over the lacy tree-tops
Is like your piquant,
White face
Above your black mantilla.

4

There is a southwind
And a full moon to-night.

The moon and the wind
Sicken my heart within me
For things
That have been
And cannot be.

5

The mocking-bird
Is chanting melodies,
But I do not hear him,
For your voice
Is throbbing
Beneath my casement.

And when it ceases
I pray
The rose I have thrown
Has kissed
The lips I have never seen,
O, my Caballero!

6

A gili-monster
Crouches under the lily,
And I carry a stilleto
In my garter
Lest your love waver.

7

(The Hunch-back)
The cactus-plant blossoms
Red and yellow.
I love you.

8

My heart breaks for you.
But
To-day's butterfly
Is dead
To-morrow.

9

To die is happy.
The moonlight silvers the grass
The southwind whispers
Thru sick-sweet
Magnolias.
The lover singing to the senorita
In the casa next to mine
Hums the song
You sang.

10

(The Child)

To-night the moon
Is a great, new
Tortilla.
But soon
The wind will have eaten it
Bite by bite,
All away.

11

The Senora is fairer
Than you.
But.
The moon is cold
And the little stars
Are more desirable.

12

The crescent moon
Rises from the billows
Of the purple clouds.
So might your
Naked beauty
Rise from the pillows
Of your couch.

THE CANYON TRAIL

There's a trail we all must travel leadin' to a
canyon edge
And th' bottom o' th' canyon is lost in endless
night,
An' we tremble at th' shadows as we peer across
th' ledge
For th' other wall is nothingness, pierced once
with beacon-light.

But we know that thar is sumthin' on th' canyon's
other side,
For th' learnéd folks, they tell us, an' besides, our
hearts, they know.
But I often sit an' wonder if it's like th' trail I ride
Thru th' wavin' grass in springtime, when th'
winds thet chuckle, blow.

They hev promised that it's "fairer far than aught
upon this earth."
'Pears tu me that's right impossible, 'cause ridin'
o' th' plains
Forever an' forever is lots more than I am worth,
Since they promised we'd be free of fleas an'
snakes an' "fleshly pains."

Fill yur pipe an' think about it, pardner, wakin' up tu find
A pony waitin' fer yu, nickerin' with ears stuck up,
Hearin' leather creak, an' hoof-beats, an' a sun a-smilin' kind
Dawn-wind blowin' an' yur cayuse frettin' like a playful pup.

Watch th' praries rollin' westward, lost in gold an' ruby bars,
An' th' moon a-risin', smilin' like th' lady o' yur heart;
An' yu lie down by yur camp-fire, thet's a-winkin' at th' stars
Feel th' dew come thru th' sky's coat where th' linin's ripped apart.

Singin' songs an' tellin' stories with th' boys thet's gone before.
Ropin' long-horned Texas cattle (tho' they don't deserve tu go!)
Wond'rin' at this old world's beauty. Reckon I don't want no more,
Sittin' easy-like an' watchin' where th' herd is millin' slow.

Halos wuzn't made tu fit me. Rather hev my Stetson hat,
An' I'm much too thin an ugly tu wear "th' garments white."
Drinkin' milk an' eatin' honey—Hell! I couldn't live on that!
An' think o' singing hyms an' playin' harps all day an' night!

Reckon He has got us branded, an' He'll herd us tu th' place
Where we fit in best—an' pardner, I jes' hope my brand is right
When I pull my pony's head up, an' finish with th' race
An' cross th' gloomy canyon tu th' streak o' beacon-light.

SPRING ENCHANTMENT

Under the soft enchantment of the spring
  We sat beneath a blossoming cherry-tree,
And from the open book upon your lap
  You read an ancient poet's lines to me.

The poem was all of spring, and lovers' loves.
  Softly I took the hand upon your knee
And kissed it. All unknowing, you read on.
  And yet—you read the same line thrice to me.

IN THE SHADOWS

In the shadows of the canyon rides a cowboy, loping slow,
And his scarlet scarf is flapping,
And his leather chaps are slapping
And he times his pony's hoof-beats with a song he's singing low.

"O, I'm coming tu you thru th' night's soft gloom,
Senorita with velvet eyes,
O'er th' hill where th' manzanitas bloom
Red as your lips where my last kiss lies,
And the caballeros that crowd tu your feet,
Mia amore, th' world may see,
And theirs is your smile when th' daylight is sweet,
But your kisses are all for me."

In the shadows of the patio stands a maid with velvet eyes,
And the wanton breeze is playing
Thru her hair and softly saying
"He is coming, thru the safety of the night's enshrouding skies."

"O, he comes, tho' the canyon walls rear stark,
Mi, amor, mi corizon,
And the hoofs of his pony strike fire in the dark,
Fire that mounts to the purple dawn.
My home and my father I'm leaving for thee.
(Why do my frightened pulses start?)
But love is the master that bids me flee
And answer the call of my heart."

In the shadow of the palm-tree a menacing shadow creeps
And the maiden's eyes are dreaming
But a dagger-point is gleaming
As they wait within the garden where the calla-lily sleeps.

"O, he's coming to love, but its death he'll find,
At the end of my thirsty point, death!
And never his brows with her hair shall he bind,
And he never will know the ghost of her breath.
A gringo is not for the blushing rose,
Perfect rose of Old Mexico,
And or ever the first faint dawn-wind blows,
He will sleep the sleep of eternal snow."

In the shadows of the dawning lies a cowboy, still
and cold,
On his lips a smile of gladness,
But the maiden's laugh is madness
And her fingers touch his hair, but her face is drawn
and old.

"The garden flowers awake with the day,
But you sleep, tho' I touch your hair,
My father awakes, and you must not stay,
Tho' you smile, there is danger there.
I have called you and called you with kisses
of love,
Why are your lips so dumb?
And the dawning has pierced thru the black
above
Mi amor, O, why did you come?"

THE DESERT

The bare,
Swelling desert
Is like dull silver
Under the light
Of the late, summer moon.
The little stars
Are soft with caresses
And the wind is laden
With priceless perfumes
Of the south.
Even the far-off coyote's cry
Is mournful-sweet.
My desert-land is as fair
As any woman—
And truer!

ROMANCE RIDES

Romance rides with a foot-loose rein,
Over the world and back again.

He jingles his spurs in the twilight's gloom
  Peopled with memories born of a sigh.
A shadow is cast by his broad-brimmed hat
  Over the heat when the sun is high.

Whistling a tune, unamazed, unafraid,
  Facing the world with a laugh in his eye,
Daring to love and to hate as he wills,
  Daring to live, and daring to die.

Ready the bark of his blue six-gun
  Quick as his laugh or his hunting-cry,
Part of the wind and the unfenced plains,
  Part of the sea and part of the sky.

Singing love-songs to the low, soft moon;
  Taking the trail that is hardest to ride,
Hardest to ride, tho' it's blazed very clear
  With a heart and an arrow on either side.

Over the mesa and out of the pass
  Down where the canyon plunges to night;
Out where the sage and the bluebonnets bloom;
  Marking the curve of the eagle's flight.

Over the death of the desert's waste;
  Topping a peak with a snow-capped crest;
Down to the cool of the forests' shade;
  Giving bullet for bullet and jest for jest.

Scarlet scarf in the cool dawn-wind;
  Leather on leather and rythmical beat,
(Echoed by whirr of the riata's loop
  As it falls) of the pony's flying feet.

Romance rides out of the sunset's fire
And follows the trail of the Heart's Desire.

THE BROKEN STRING

Brightly-colored glass beads.
But the string has broken
And the gay baubles
Have scattered away over the floor
Uncollectably.

They were my thoughts of you
Strung on the string
Of my faith.

IDLE DUSK

Do you recall the idle dusk we sat
  And watched the rising of the old, red moon,
And listened to the frogs' and crickets' hum
  That deepened twilight stillness into gloom.

The scent of sodden green things in the brook
  Commingled with crushed wild-flowers where you lay.
A mocking-bird sighed softly, and the bell
  Of cows, home-driven with the dying day

Struck deeply. Night-winds fanned thru the trees
  That magic dusk turned into purple mist,
And high above the one last touch of day
  Clung to the canyon-crag the sun had kist.

Beautiful things in the woof of a faery hour
  Peopled with thoughts as old and rare as musk.
How could we know the treasure-trove we found
  As, hand in hand, we dreamed thru the idle dusk.

DESOLATION

Yesterday
The wind chuckled
Thru shining mesquite trees,
And a mocking-bird
Sang
To a sunbeam
That danced
On a rose.
But today
A dejected pony
Stands,
Head down and tail-to-wind
And there is no sound
Save the desolate beat
Of the rain,
And the mournful cry
Of a dove.
For yesterday
You lived.

THIS TIME LAST YEAR

"This time last year"!
O, the magic phrase, dear!
    Mysterious as "Once upon a time" and "Long ago."
Let us draw the curtains
And sit before the fire, dear,
    And wander down the pathways that we used to know.

Crisp and frosty mornings,
Diamond-studded tree-tops,
    Shout and merry shout again down the snowy trail.
Sweet summer dawn, set
With dew-entangled blossoms,
    Hiding 'neath the gossamer of the spider's veil.

Cherry-blooms in Springtime.
(O, don't you remember?)
    Kiss and kiss returned again where the petals fell.
Dreaming thru the noonday
Lost in love's imaginings,
    Calling down into the depths of the wishing well.

Twilight, starlit,
Hand within my hand, dear,
    Wandering a-down the road, crisp with autumn leaves.
Gold and red and brown leaves
Wavering around us,
    Moving in the circle that the west wind weaves.

Raindrops pattering
All along the low eaves.
    (Turn the lights lower and watch the shadows creep.)
Pattering a low song
Full of home and love, dear,
    Home and love and lullabies, and baby eyes that sleep.

"This time last year"
And many happy years ago.
    (I can see the firelight sparkle on your tears.)
Sweet youth, lost youth
Creeping back with twilight,
    Shyly smiling at us thru the dusk of years.

TO H. M.

You who loved the open places so,
  Whose soul sang in a sunset or a star,
The sleepy mocking-bird's belated note
  Over the silvered desert quivering far.

Magnificently fearless, roughly kind,
  And, better than all these things, serenely true,
The little night-winds whisper that you loved,
  Whisper again the tales they told to you.

A gold-brown butterfly has come with fall
  And gold-brown leaves. All is the same
As it was yesterday. And these things speak
  As surely of you as if they spoke your name.

Brave heart! I pray when you have won the shore
  Beyond the shadow river, when you face
That beautiful Beyond, it will unroll
  In blinding desert-lands that stately pace

In purple folds to sunset-crimsoned skies,
  And all the ghosts of winds from this lost land
Will whisper age-old tales in the huisache tree,
  And a bridle-bit will jingle 'neath your hand.

LA CASA GRANDE

It is set far back in its rolling, purpling lawns,
And the tall, green palms
Reach up like open hands
To caress its shadowed walls.
The bold, lush flowers are so brilliant
That, even at night,
They glow and shine beneath the myriad stars
That whisper thru the gloom.
The desert wind sighs secrets thru the trees
Age-old secrets to the huisache tree
And broad bananna leaves.
A frog
Booms out a bass accompaniment to the cry
The crickets' chant.
Far off
A glass tinkles and a girl
Laughs lightly.
And the strum
Of a guitar and wailing of a violin
Croon "La Paloma" to the Spanish night.
And, somehow, on the balcony,
A shadow flits.
A phantom hand lays light along the stone

Of the great pillar;
And a dream-ghost face
Smiles out from underneath black, curling hair
Muffled, O, ever so lightly, with the sheer
Gossamer of a white robosa.
And she throws
A red rose to a long-dead lover's song.
The "Dove Song" dies and surely there is naught
Within the balcony save cobwebbed dark—
But on the garden walk the lazy wind
Stirs faded petals of a dead, red rose.

(For Lillian)

WHY

Why does the crest of the laurel-tree,
  Dim in the twilight,
Moving gently in desert winds,
  Wrench forth a sigh,
And make me wonder, vaguely
  As the soft night,
Why should God's beauties live
  While we must die?

A COWBOY TO A WIRE FENCE

Yu onery, thousand-legged, skinney ole cuss!
  Yu sure give me one awful pain!
Ef I rambled th' whole o' this wide-spreadin' earth
  I'd run intu you jus' th' same.

Yu set thar a-grinnin'! I can't see no joke!
  Yu glitter, fer miles, in th' sun.
Now I could wheel my pony an' leave yu behind,
  But I'd meet yu agin, on th' run.

Yur plumb quiet,—intrudin' yur length on th' plains
  They say yu are better then ropes
An' horses fer herdin' up cattle. It looks
  Like they're right,—an' thar ain't any hopes.
I could swing my riata 'round one o' yur posts
  An' drag yu, plumb easy, tu hell.
But thar's too dam much of yu. It isn't no use.
  Which, I recken, is just as well.

What you think o' it, Broncho? I don't need tu ask
  With yur ears an' yur head hangin' low.
It hez beat us, ole hoss, at our own game. I guess
  Thar ain't nuthin' fer us—but tu go.

ENVY

Are you awake to-night, sweetheart
  While the moon stoops low in the sky,
Stoops like a bride in a misty veil
  While the stars go whirling by?

I think I am very envious
  Of the moon and the wind from the south
For one may ruffle your hair to-night
  And the other may kiss your mouth.

COLOR

Gold deserts and gold clouds;
A gray coyote;
A rain-dove, sighing low,
Its lonesome note;

A black-snake coils and gleams;
A cactus-bloom
Raises a scarlet chalice o'er its thorns
With sweet perfume;

A bright mesquite tree waves;
An azure sky;
And, reeling out against the setting sun,
Black buzzards fly.

RAJHAM KHAN'S SONG

There was a night when you were wholly mine.
I swam in the purple sea of your shining hair.
My kisses burnt hot on your lips that gave them again,
For I was the Strong and you, my love, were the Fair.

O, many a sun has set, and other lips
Have drunk their fill of your full lips scarlet wine,
But when his love wearies, I pray you, remember, Sweet,
That there was a night when your beauty was wholly mine.

"YALLER"

Thar's a cross-roads in West Texas on th' Crawlin' River floor
And a 'dobe shack squats down thar among th' brush an' stones.
It's a place thet's most permiscuous fer th' sort o' general store
Thet is kep' by him th' cowboys hev cognomened "Yaller" Jones.

"Yaller" is th' sort o' feller thet is small, an' awful meek,
With blue eyes thet seem tu be a-seein' things thet are not there!
Hez a sort o' foolish grin, an' tells yu "turn th' other cheek"
When yu're whalloped. So th' nickname seemed tu fit him purty fair!

He's a Yankee frum New England. College eddicated! Say!
Perlitest lil'l feller ever thar could be.
Brought his half-a-lung, fer savin', out Crawlin' River way,
Tho' whut he got frum livin', us cowhands couldn't see.

Once th' sheriff put a sign up on "Yaller's" li'l door,
Tellin' those who cared tu read it, thet a two-gun man wuz out
By th' name o' "Terror" Johnson, an' th' outfit thet he wore
Would be worth, with him inside it, several hundred, thereabout.

One dark night when li'l "Yaller" wuz a-readin' o' his book
Some guy pumped twelve six-gun bullets at th' middle o' th' door,
Which, when opened, showed a feller with a awful nasty look.
"Put my letters on thet sign thar. Are yu wantin' any more?"

But when he seed 'twas "Yaller" he jus' laughed an' started 'roun'
An' helped himself, rambunctious, tu whut he wanted in th' place.
A-throwin' whut he didn't want, right keerless, on th' ground
An' then he ended up by slappin' "Yaller" in th' face.

Now us boys hed laughed at "Yaller," but we
figgered we wuz men,
An' o' course we couldn't hit him, 'cause he wuz
so small an' weak,
So we never could quite "sabe" whut happened thar
an' then
After "Yaller" ups an' lets th' bad man slap his
other cheek.

He jus' smiled an' rolled his sleeves up, moved th'
table an' th' chairs
Sayin', soft-like, "Will you please remove your
guns, and we will fight."
An' th' "Terror" laughed uproarous, flinging cuss-
words everywheres,
But he took his two blue gats off,—an' walked
intu "Yaller's" right

Then things happened rather startlin', like a locoed
cyclone loose,
An' "Yaller," with thet bad man, sorta mussed
his place up some,
An' when he hed him roped an' tied up, like a
Christmas goose,
He set down an' read his bible, 'til th' sheriff's
posse come.

When they took him out tu hang him, th' "Terror's" last request
Wuz tu know how "Yaller" done it. An' him, standin' in th' door,
Raised his eyes an' smiled so meekly, an'—boys, I'll be blest!
He jes' murmured "Jiu jitsu," an' he wouldn't say no more.

"Quien sabe" all th' meanin' of that funny li'l word,
But when I seen th' gizzard thet thet li'l feller hed
Wuz "Slap-ee" twict, an' then lit in an' cleaned th' slapper-bird.—
Well, someway, I guess a college eddication ain't so bad!

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